



Islamic Village Stories

My Chinese Village

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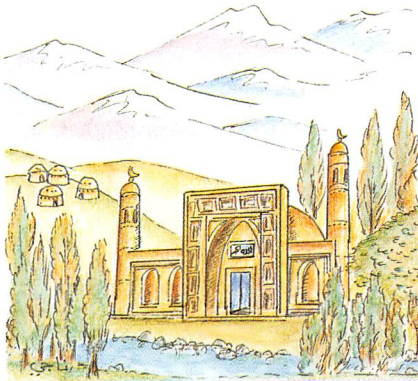
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Goodwordkidz

Islamic Village Stories

My Chinese Village

(East Turkistan)



Written & Illustrated by
Luqman Nagy

Goodword**kidz**
Helping you build a family of faith

This book is dedicated to
the kind people of Uyghuristan.

Goodword Books Pvt. Ltd.
1, Nizamuddin West Market
New Delhi-110 013
E-mail: info@goodwordbooks.com
Printed in India
First published 2004
© Goodword Books 2004

www.goodwordbooks.com

INTRODUCTION

Many people do not know that a large community of Muslims live in the remote area of western China referred to as "Sinkiang", East Turkistan or Uyghuristan in English, or *Xinjiang (shinjang)* in Chinese. Millions of Uyghur Turkish Muslims live there and they have preserved their language and Islamic lifestyle despite enormous odds.

This book introduces young readers to a typical Uyghur village of Gonja, home to Nur Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamid. Much of what is written here reflects my personal experiences when travelling through the towns and villages of Uyghuristan in the summer of 1988. At that time, the Uyghur Muslims had been permitted a degree of religious freedom. For example, I personally witnessed the construction and rebuilding of many mosques throughout the region. Unfortunately, today, these freedoms are once again being denied to the Uyghur Muslims.

Nur Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamid speaks proudly of his culture, history and Islamic faith. *Insha'Allah*, all young readers of this book will come to appreciate not only the great richness of the cultural diversity present in our living *dar al-islam*, but also the importance of preserving it.

To you all my salaams.

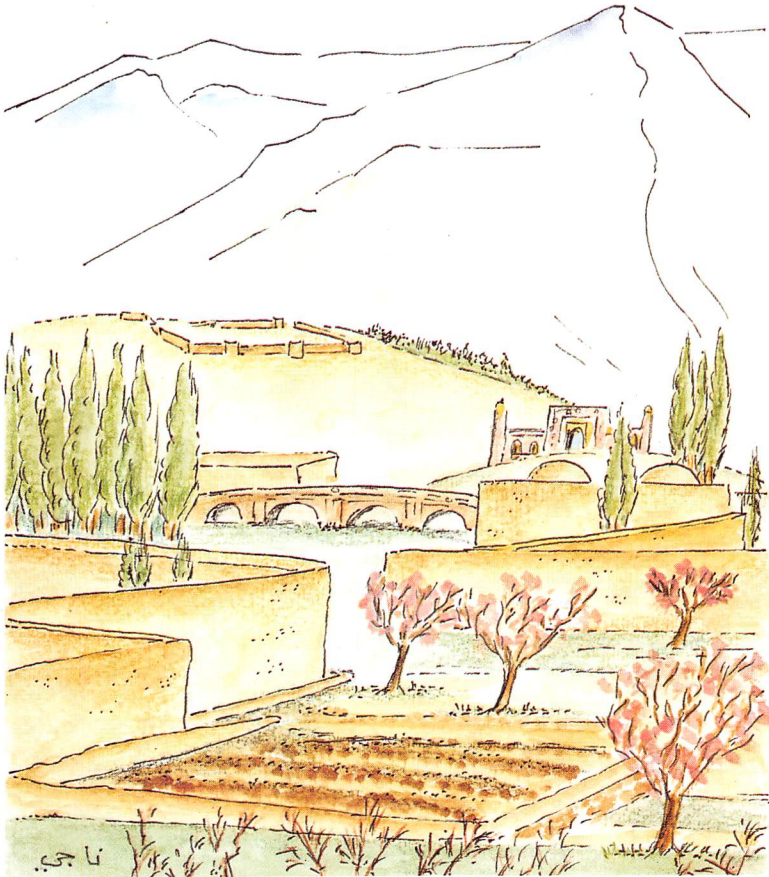
King Fahd University
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Luqman Nagy
July 2003



1. My Mountainous Country

My name is Nur Muhammad 'Abd al-Hamid and I live in Western China. I am a fourteen-year-old Uyghur Muslim boy, *al-Hamdulillah*. I live in a beautiful village called Gonja, which means "flower bud" in our language, Uyghurje. Our language is a form of Turkish, similar to the Uzbek language spoken in neighbouring Uzbekistan, but we use Arabic script to write it. My homeland, Uyghuristan, or East (Sharqi) Turkistan, was once





Arabic calligraphy (Bismillah)

Here is a beautiful example of the bismillah written in khat al-sini, or the “Chinese” style of Arabic calligraphy. Chinese Muslims developed this handwriting style hundreds of years ago and it is still being used by Chinese Muslims when writing on ceramic tiles and other objects of art. Even our handwriting style has been influenced by khat al-sini.

independent, but today we live in the largest province of China: the *Xinjang* (Shinjang) *Uyghur Autonomous Region*.

Uyghuristan is a land of very high snow-capped mountains. The Altai, Tien Shan, Pamir, Karakoram and Kunlun Shan mountain ranges all create natural boundaries to the north, west and south. In the centre of our province lies the immense and inhospitable Takla Makan Desert. Takla Makan is a Turkish name which means “the place that if one enters, one doesn’t leave”! Our village is an oasis on the edge of the desert and in the foothills of the giant Tien Shan mountain peaks. “Welcome to our village”, or as we say in Uyghurje: *kharshi elish* !

Life here in the high plateau is difficult. Summers

are short and the winters very long and bitterly cold. Most villagers are farmers. Although the growing season is short, the gardens, orchards and fields of Uyghuristan produce an amazing amount of delicious fruits and vegetables, *masha 'Allah*. In the spring and summer, rivers and streams run fast with water from melted snow. *Al-Hamdulillah*, each winter, the heavy snow cover helps to replenish the underground reservoirs of fresh water which are also used for irrigation.

Uyghurs have been Muslim for more than a thousand years. In 751 CE, the Uyghurs joined the Arab army and defeated the mighty T'ang Dynasty. After this, Islam slowly became the most important religion in Central Asia. In 934 CE, the Uyghur ruler Saltuk Bughra Khan became the first Turkish leader to embrace Islam. For the first time, mosques and *madrasahs* were built throughout Uyghuristan. For the first time too, the people of the high mountain peaks, deep valleys and small towns and villages skirting the desert all heard the call to one deity, the call to Islam and the call to success: *Allah-u akbar, Allah-u akbar, hayya 'ala al-falah, hayya 'ala al-falah*.

2. The Farming Life

The ancestral home of the Uyghur people and all Turkic people is Mongolia. Before the advent of Islam, Uyghur tribes had migrated westwards. Eventually, my people reached the area we now call home: the north western

part of the present-day People's Republic of China. Although many Turkish-speaking tribes of central and west Asia are still nomadic, the Uyghurs became settled farmers hundreds of years ago. In fact, the word "Uyghur" means "civilized".

Today, here in Gonja village, my father tends our large orchard. He is an excellent gardener and has learned many skills from his father and grandfather. For centuries, the Uyghur people have used an ingenious



method to bring water from long distances to their gardens and fields. Ancient *kariz*, or water canals – some above and some under ground – help divert the water from mountain streams and deep underground reservoirs. Our village is on the edge of the desert, but because of this supply of fresh water, we are able to grow succulent fruits and a wide variety of vegetables, *al-Hamdulillah*.

Masha'Allah, I believe the sweetest melons in the world are found right here in our garden; they taste as if they were soaked in honey! My father's peaches are some of the largest and juiciest I have ever eaten. Our apricot trees, however, give us the biggest harvest. Apricots always seem to thrive in the highland valleys where so many other fruit trees simply won't grow. It is now spring and as you can see, the apricot trees are in full blossom. In late summer, we dry the apricots on rooftops and save the preserved fruit for the long cold winters. We also crack open the many piles of apricot stones to obtain the delicious protein-rich kernels inside. Apricot kernels taste like almonds and are very healthy!

Outside of the village, in irrigated fields, my uncles and other villagers grow barley, corn, potatoes, and sugar beets. Working in the fields is always hard, but *al-Hamdu-lillah*, we can always see the fruits of our labour. After the barley crop has been cut, the grain must be threshed. In late summer, the sun at these high altitudes can be very fierce. We, therefore, sometimes thresh the barley in the evening. We work from *salat al-'isha* to *salat al-fajr*. What a wonderful feeling it is to work so hard in the open air under a full moon! No artificial

light disturbs the work. In the middle of the night, we have some cool honey melon and refreshing water. When we hear the *adhan al-fajr*, from our village mosque, we make our ablutions and pray together outside in the field. A cool morning breeze blows from behind us as we carry the sacks of grain back to the village.

Al-Hamdulillah, one evening's hard work gives us a year's supply of barley flour !

3. The Traditional Uyghur Home

As I have said, the Uyghur people abandoned the nomadic lifestyle centuries ago. We now live in permanent settlements: villages like Gonja, or towns and cities such as Kashgar, Turfan, or our capital, Urumchi.

Gonja village is a typical Uyghur village. As in so many other parts of *dar al-islam*, here in the high plateau of western China, we make our houses out of mud and straw. We are a very creative and artistic people. The design of traditional houses is very old. It is also very Islamic. Each house is surrounded by a high wall of compacted earth. A colourful wooden door opens onto a spacious yard which contains many potted flowering plants, grape vines and fruit trees. Surrounding the village are rows of poplar trees that provide shade in summer, but more importantly, help to act as a screen against the frequent dust storms that blow off the desert.

Indoor plumbing is a luxury found only in large villages or towns. A channel of clean, clear water runs like a small stream above ground into the courtyard. It is from here that we get our water for cooking, washing and watering the garden.



We live in a harsh environment. Both the long winter and short summer can be difficult with extreme cold and unbearable heat. Our houses, therefore, are little oases in the desert. We build and decorate our houses to provide comfort to both body and soul. In the warmer months we eat our meals outdoors on a raised veranda or porch whose roof is supported by decorated poplar beams.

Today, my mother has placed a typical Uyghur lunch on the table. Today, we are eating big bowls of *laghman*, a thick soup of home-made noodles, chopped potatoes, carrot, green peppers and tasty seasonings. It is believed that the Italians invented macaroni, spaghetti and other forms of pasta. In truth, it was the Italian Marco Polo who discovered pasta first in the Turkish lands he visited while travelling along the Silk Road from east Asia to the western Mediterranean sea ports, and he took the various noodle recipes back home with him to Italy.

Our bread dough is made with milk so the baked bread is deliciously chewy. Each flat loaf has a decorative stamp or hole in the centre. Watermelon, or *tavuz*, is always offered to guests whenever they enter our homes. We begin all our meals, of course, with *bismillah*. After such a wonderful meal, it is good to remember Allah by saying *al-Hamdulillah*. Even in our language, Uyghurje, we use the Arabic word *rahmet* to mean “thank you”.

4. Our Animals

We are farmers here in Gonja village. *Al-Hamdulillah*, by careful use of the underground water and our natural

streams and rivers, we can grow many kinds of fruits and vegetables. The surrounding mountains and their forests provide us with a chance to hunt and trap animals there. One of my uncles is an expert hunter. All his life he has been hunting and trapping wild rabbit, marten and fox. Sometimes he is in the mountains for several



وَأَيُّ لَدْعٍ لِلأَرْضِ الْمَيْتَةِ
 没有入便 那能但有可 的却現在我 的能前

أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا
 死了的 兩又是那 的上的早 的能死後 的能活

مِنْهَا أَحْبَابًا
 死後能活 的能死後 的能死後

وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا جَنَّاتٍ تَنْزِيلًا
 叫人的吃他

وَأَعَابٍ
 死作地而 的能死後 的能死後 的能死後 的能死後

This is an old, hand-written page of a Qur'an with its interpretation in Chinese language. My grandfather brought this Qur'an from eastern China years ago when he travelled there as a young man. A large Muslim population who are ethnic Chinese live in areas outside of Uyghuristan. For them, a Chinese language interpretation of the ayahs helps them better understand the Holy Qur'an. Al-Hamdulillah, I can read Arabic well and can even understand some of the Chinese written here. In Uyghuristan, we must study both Uyghurje and Chinese at school.

months on end. He cooks and eats rabbit meat and returns to the village with the animal skins.

The fur of these wild animals is beautiful and in the illustration you can see some fur hats for sale along with our traditional prayer hats or *takkiyahs*. I read how the North American Indians and Eskimos (two groups who also originated in east Asia) hunted animals. Some people say it is cruel to hunt wild animals. In the Holy

Qur'an, Allah says in *surah al-ma'idah*:

O you who have attained to faith. Be true to your covenants! Lawful to you is the [flesh of every] beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [herein after]: but you are not allowed to hunt while you are in the state of pilgrimage. Behold, Allah ordains in accordance with His will.

My uncle uses a yak or a "ship of the plateau" when he travels up into the high mountain valleys. This animal is truly amazing! It looks like a very hairy, short-legged ox. Because it has excellent balance, the yak is a wonderful pack animal and can carry loads of up to 50-60 kilograms along dangerous mountain paths. The animal's long hair is used to make rope, cloth and even felt matting.

Yaks are milked in the summer. The milk is very rich and makes good butter. In the villages in the south of Uyghuristan, a thick tea/soup is made of boiled milk, tea, salt and yak butter.

Masha'Allah, the yak is superbly adapted to the harsh mountain environment. Short legs let it climb over rocky heights. It has powerful lungs, too. Its blood cells are smaller than those of normal cattle and has three times as many of them. A yak's blood, therefore, can carry more oxygen. The animal's long hair helps insulate its body. With no sweat glands, the yak is truly unique. My uncle tells me that yaks even travel over snow in single file; a head yak leaves foot prints that guide all others behind it!

As I grow older, and learn more about my interesting world, I understand that like the yak, we Uyghurs, are also perfectly adapted to our environment, *al-Hamdulillah*.

5. Our Nomadic Neighbours

In the fall and winter months, nomads camp on the hills surrounding our village. Most of them are either Kirghiz or Kazakh Turks. Although their language is a little different from ours, we can still understand one another. Each year the nomads' children spend a few months in our school studying with us, so I even have a few nomad friends.

Nomads are a part of our life and *al-Hamdulillah*, we are all Muslims. I have visited them in their unique circular tents (called "yurts" in English) and have seen how they make and erect them.

Nomads for most part of the year are on the move, always looking for greener pastures for their animals. Therefore they should be able to move quickly, even with their homes! And thousands of years ago, nomadic people in Central Asia developed a very practical way of making a light-weight, portable dwelling.

By sprinkling water on layers of sheep's, camel's, or yak's wool, a very durable felt matting could be made. Lattice walls of the circular tent, called an *oy* in Turkic languages (modern Turkish *ev* means "house"), were made from branches that were bent until they met in

a central “roof ring” called a *tunduk*. Felt mats were placed over the wooden frames. When the weather got cold, more matting could be applied and in warmer weather, mats could be removed for the circulation of fresh air.



The interior of an *oy* is very attractive. The doorway is covered with a colourful felt rug with beautiful stitched patterns on it. On the inside, long, narrow hand-woven *malbands* are wrapped around the frame poles to hold the tent wall together. All the many practical floor coverings and wall hangings are hand-made by Kirghiz women.

The typical *oy* is divided into three parts. The older members of the family and honoured guests sit directly across from the entrance. Male family members stay on the right side of the *oy*. Women work in the left side in the *ashkbana*, or kitchen. This is screened off from the rest of the *oy* by beautiful reed matting.

A typical *oy* can be quickly and easily erected and taken apart. The wooden frames and all the inside and outside coverings can be loaded onto a single camel or yak.

Masha'Allah, nomads as you can see, are very self-sufficient. They can live for months on end in very remote areas and live on the dairy products provided by their animals. Here you can see my friend's Kirghiz *oy*. A felt covering has been folded up to let in fresh air. On top of the yurt in front are cones of stone-hard cheese called *qurut* in our language. These are used to make a thick, nutritious soup in the winter months.

The circular nomadic yurt is truly an ingenious invention that enables its owners to be in total harmony with their environment. Wherever they happen to be – in the high mountain pastures in summer, the foothills in winter – they are Muslims and recall Allah's words in the Qur'an in *surah al-hadid, ayah 4* : *wa huwa ma'*

kum 'ayna ma kuntum. ("And He [Allah] is with you wherever you may be.")

6. The Sunday Open-Air Market

Today is Sunday, market day. For centuries, villagers have met once a week in an open area just outside Gonja village. Our part of Uyghuristan is on the



crossroads for merchants coming from Russia in the north, Iran and Afghanistan in the west, and from Pakistan, India and Tibet in the south. Traders would all meet here on the “roof of the world” (or *bam-i dunya* as it is known by us in Tajik Persian).

In the past, long camel caravans originating in eastern China would pass by Gonja village. At regular intervals along the route from China to western Turkey, *caravanserais* (way stations) were built to offer rest and shelter to both man and beast. The long camel caravans are now just a memory. Today, Pakistan and Indian traders travel in huge colourfully painted diesel trucks. They travel up from the south over the newly built Karakoram Highway into China. Still, in and around Gonja village one can see signs of the old caravan trade. On a hill, one large *caravansera* is now just a mud ruin, but its size indicates its importance. The courtyard had stables for more than a hundred pack animals! Along the roadways there are also ancient carved milestones with Chinese and Uyghurje inscriptions giving the distances between way stations.

When I visit the Sunday market, I think of what it must have been like centuries ago. In some ways, little has changed. One can still hear a variety of languages spoken: several Turkish dialects, Tajik Persian, Chinese, Urdu and even some English! What is most amazing are the incredible sights in the market. Animals of all kinds are sold in one part: chickens, ducks, geese, goats, sheep, donkeys, mules, horses, two-humped Bactrian camels, and even short-legged, hairy yaks. In another part of the market, food stuffs, both fresh and dried, are

sold. Village women sell delicious thick yoghurt in blue ceramic bowls. Dried apricots, raisins and cherries are offered in overflowing sacks. It is the great variety of superb fresh fruits and vegetables, however, that really impresses the visitor. Sweet red pomegranates, peaches, pears, plums and , of course, a dozen kinds of grapes and *khoghuns* (melons) bear witness to Allah's great blessings upon the hard working Uyghur farmers.

The skullcap or *doppa* sellers are always busy with customers. Colourful square embroidered caps are worn by both young and old. The *yengisar* (knife) sellers also sell a lot of wares. *Yengisars* are beautiful, hand-crafted decorative knives that are also practical, durable and sharp.

Time passes quickly on a market day. Soon, one hears the call to *dhubr* prayer. In a makeshift *musallah*, high up on the "roof of the world", local villagers as well as foreign traders – Afghan, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Pakistani, and Tajik – all pray together, shoulder to shoulder. We ask Allah that we may always be travellers : travellers on the *sirat al-mustaqi m*.

7. Uyghur Arts and Crafts

The people of our village are extremely artistic. We live in a very rugged but beautiful landscape and these natural surroundings have always influenced our architecture and our own sense of decoration.

The Uyghur people have a very long history as far

as arts and crafts are considered. Wonderful examples of Uyghur frescoes (wall paintings) have been preserved in the caves in and around the towns skirting the Takla Makan Desert. When we became Muslims, *al-Hamdulillah*, our art became even more beautiful.

As Muslims, we are forbidden to represent any human or animal form. As a result, we looked at our natural world for inspiration. For example, our artists have always incorporated beautiful landscapes showing in great detail the flowers and fruits of our gardens. Also durable bricks were made using the honey-coloured earth. In the hands of a master bricklayer, exquisitely designed walls, *mihrahs*, and minarets were produced. Even today, in towns like Turfan, where my aunt lives, there are gigantic decorated minarets made from hundreds of thousands of bricks. Over the centuries, earthquakes have occurred ; whole towns and villages have been destroyed and covered up by the sands of the Takla Makan. Still, these minarets survive, *masha'Allah* and attest to the skill of the master craftsmen who made them.

We have an interesting custom here in Gonja village. When any family member gets married, everyone in the village helps to build a house for the happy couple. Of course, a master bricklayer guides us in the construction. Another gifted artist will paint the carved wooden poplar beams and rafters. The beautiful floral patterns on them reflect our great love of gardening.

We take very special care when building our mosques and other religious buildings. The walls are typically made from local brick. The columns supporting the heavy wooden beams of the roof are beautifully



carved and painted. Even the most modest mosque will have such columns and rafters. You can see here the capital, or top of one such column from our mosque.

Three artists of our village recently went to a special school in Urumchi, our capital city. There they studied

in great detail the many arts and crafts of the Uyghur people. Because of young artists such as these, our traditions are being kept alive, *al-Hamdulillah*.

8. An Ancient Local Language

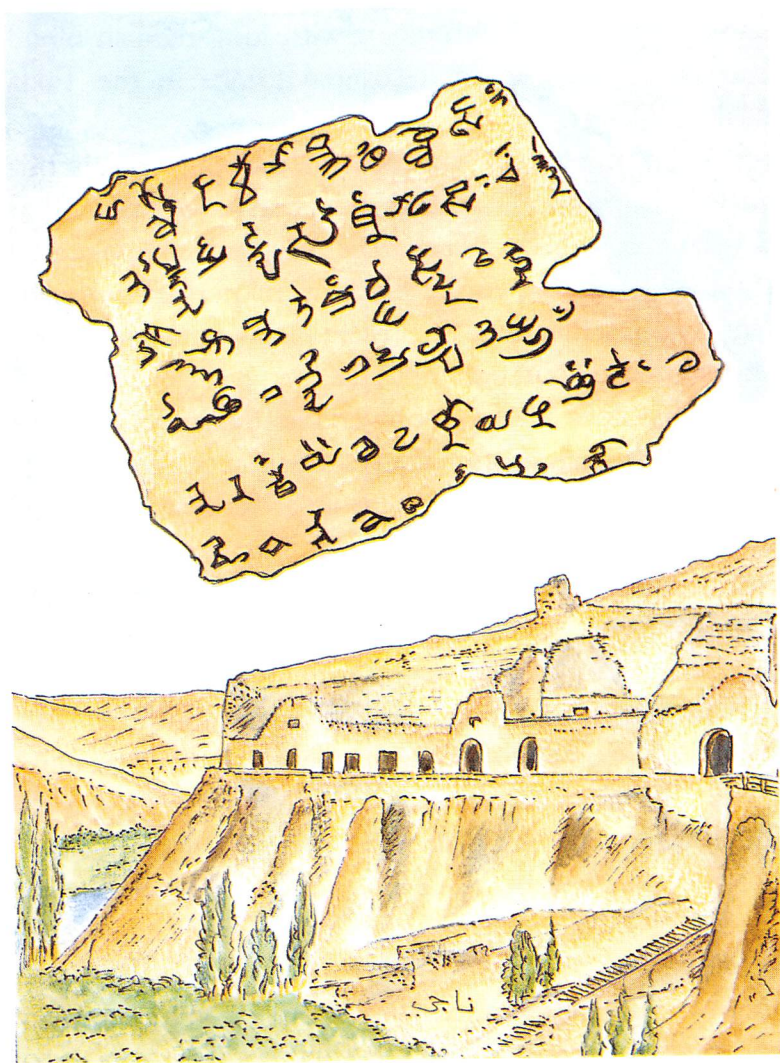
As Muslims, we know the power and importance of language. Our religion, *din al-haqq al-islam*, encourages all Muslims to learn to read and acquire knowledge. Even before embracing Islam a thousand year ago, the Uyghur people had a written language with its own unique alphabet. Like all old languages, Uyghurje has a wealth of proverbs. One such Uyghur proverb is the following:

yahxi gep taxni yarar (“Good words break rocks!”) Of course, Allah says in the Holy Qur’an in *surah al-baqarah*, *ayah* 263: “Kind words and the covering of faults are better than charity followed by injury.”

From the desert towns and villages of Uyghuristan, archaeologists – scientists who study the material remains from past human life and culture – have unearthed valuable manuscripts and other cultural relics of ancient Uyghur life. Many of these objects were found well-preserved in dry caves and in sand-covered ruins.

Last summer, I went with my family to visit my aunt who lives in Turfan in the eastern part of Uyghuristan. To get there we had to travel around the

northern edge of the Takla Makan Desert, the largest desert in all of China. One hundred years ago, European scientists began to discover amazing cultural artifacts in this region of our country. Many of the manuscripts and cave paintings belonged to the time when the Uyghur people were Buddhist. However, other



manuscripts and bits of old Chinese paper and palm leaves had very strange writing on them.

The language was eventually read and discovered to be unlike any other in Central Asia. It was a European language, not a Turkic, Indian or Chinese! At the same time, perfectly preserved 3,000-year-old mummies (dead bodies of human beings or animals that have been naturally dried and shrunken) with long reddish blond hair were found in sand-covered tombs in the Takla Makan Desert.

Who were these people and did they speak this ancient European language? Scientists now believe that this language (called Tocharian) was indeed spoken by these red-haired people. They were perhaps nomads who had left the area of present-day southwest Russia and settled in our part of Asia.

What does all of this prove? These discoveries prove that Uyghuristan has always been a region where different peoples – even some from as far away as Europe – met and lived together. In the illustration is an old manuscript written in the Tocharian language on old Chinese paper. It was found in one of the caves used as monasteries by ancient Buddhist monks.

Tocharian was written and spoken until one thousand years ago. What happened to its speakers? They all embraced Islam – just as the Uyghur people did – and then mixed with the other peoples of Uyghuristan. Allah, *al-'Alim* (the All-Knowing), *al-Hakim* (the Most Wise), says in the Holy Qur'an in *surah al-hujurat, ayah 13*: "O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another ..."

9. A Famous Uyghur Son

History is my favourite subject in school. I study history of Islam on weekends with a *hoja* (religious teacher) who comes to our house, but at school we study about Uyghur history and culture along with the history and culture of China.

The Uyghur people were able to read and write in the past, and after embracing Islam they produced some very important written works. We read about these early writers and their interesting lives in our history classes. Perhaps the most remarkable of all Uyghur writers is Kashgarli Mahmud (or “Mahmud Al-Kashgari” in Arabic). He is truly a national hero!

Al-Kashgari was born exactly a thousand years ago in a small town in present-day Kirghizstan. He received an excellent Islamic education and at a young age travelled to many Turkish-speaking lands. He later arrived at Baghdad, the great ‘Abbasid city of learning and culture. Because many Arab scholars were interested in the Turkish people and their language, Al-Kashgari decided to write a book in Arabic about these subjects.

The book Al-Kashgari wrote in Baghdad in 1072 CE is the great Turkish dictionary known as the *divan lughat al-turk*, a language handbook for Arab scholars. The book records in detail the differences between the different Turkish languages and the history of the Turkish people. It is almost an encyclopedia of the Turkish world of the 11th century CE. Al-Kashgari gives many examples of Turkish folklore and proverbs. At school, we study pages from the *divan lughat al-turk*

in order to better understand our own history.

What makes Al-Kashgari's book even more valuable is the inclusion of the first known Turkish map showing the eastern side of the Earth. Unlike all other Islamic maps of the world, the centre of Al-Kashgari's map was not Makkah, but the Turkish-speaking border regions of today's Kirghizstan and the Xinjiang province of western China. The large yellow dot in the centre of this map indicates Barsghan, the birth place of Al-Kashgari. The colour-coding used in the map was original for its day. Gray was used for rivers and green



for seas. Light yellow represented deserts while red was used to show mountain ranges. A darker yellow indicated towns and cities.

This is a copy of Al-Kashgari's famous map that I drew and coloured myself. My teacher gave me an A+ for this project and told me that I would be a good history teacher when I grow up.

The history of my people is still not fully written. *Insha'Allah*, I will continue to study history and one day be able to write the most complete history of Uyghuristan.

10. Our Village Mosque

Here is our mosque, the heart of Gonja village. All over Uyghuristan, one can see mosques like ours in both villages and towns. Some mosques do not have large minarets, but all have at least two small minarets on either side of the mosque's courtyard gate.

For some periods in our recent history, our mosques and *madrasahs* were closed down by the state government and we were not free to worship Allah openly. In the late 1980s, before I was born, the central government in Beijing decided to allow us more freedom to practice Islam. During this time, hundreds of new mosques were built by Uyghur villagers and towns-people all across our land, *al-Hamdulillah*. Our new village mosque was built during this period.

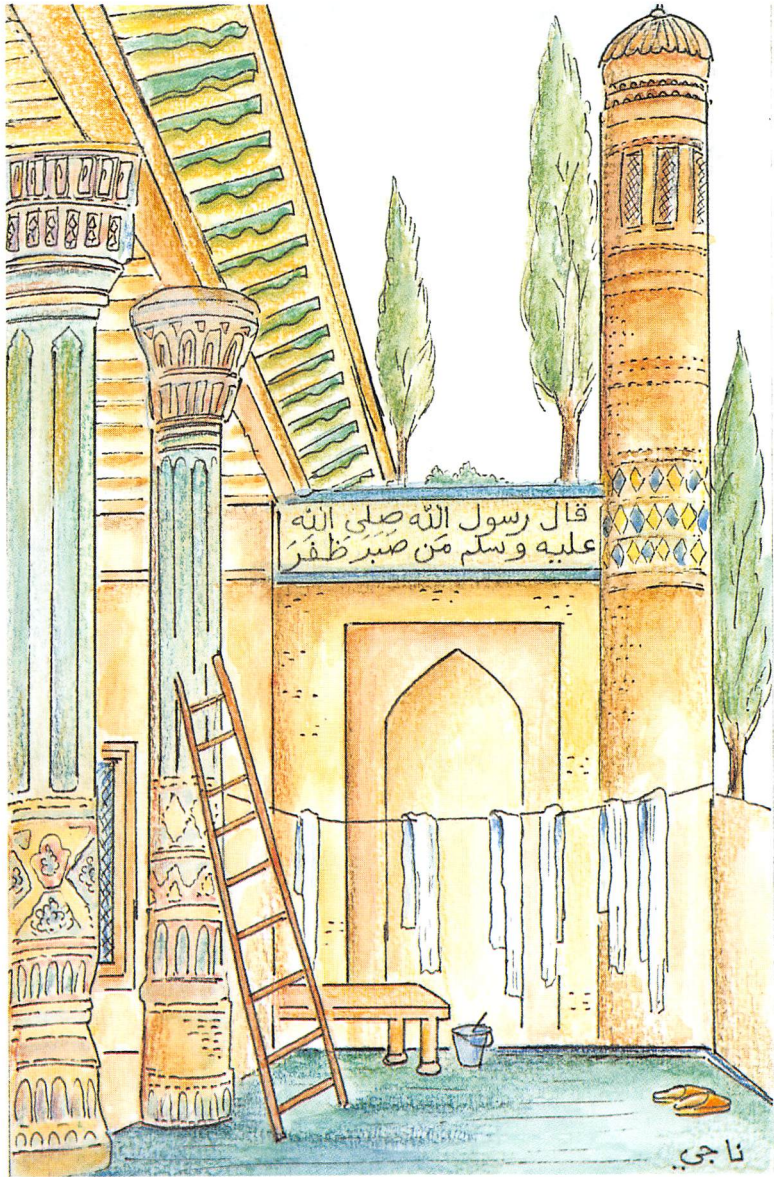
Our mosque is the most beautiful building in Gonja

village. Local bricklayers, woodcarvers, masons and painters along with all village men, women and children worked very hard to build it.

My cousin, 'Abd al-Samad, studied Arabic for many years. He can read and write it very well, *al-Hamdulillah*. Our *imam* asked him to paint some *ayahs* and *ahadeeth* on the blank upper walls of our mosque. Can you read the beautiful *hadeeth* that 'Abd al-Samad has just finished painting? The Prophet (SAWS) has told us: *man sabara dhafara* - "whoever is patient will be victorious".

In Uyghuristan today, we cannot always wear the turban in public places. Inside our mosques, however, we try to follow this *sunnah* when we perform our *salah* or prayers. Turbans are hung on a line in the courtyard and can be borrowed by any worshipper. We are a people who know and cherish our history. Islam is our faith of choice and it continues to dwell in our hearts.

On the two very special days of the Muslim calendar: *bayram* (the *'eid al-fitr* at the end of Ramadhan) and *korban* (the *'eid al-adha* or feast of the sacrifice), our mosque and its large courtyard become full and cannot contain all the Muslims who come for worship. On such occasions, hundreds and hundreds of Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder—inside the mosque, in the courtyard and far beyond the outer walls of the mosque on the village streets and alleys—and pray *salah al-'eid* together. With the chanting of the *takbir*: *Allah-u akbar, Allah-u akbar, la ilaha ill Allah*, we reaffirm our faith in Islam and our desire that in even the most remote corner of the "roof of the world", Islam will continue to guide the Uyghur people (and Muslims everywhere) to *al-falah, insha'Allah*.



GLOSSARY

- Ashkbana*: a Turkish word of Persian origin meaning “kitchen”
- Bayram*: a Persian-Turkish word referring to the Muslim religious holiday of ‘*eid al-fitr*, celebrated at the end of Ramadhan
- Doppa*: beautifully embroidered Uyghur skullcaps worn by both men and women
- Hadeeth*: The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS); (plural *ahadeeth*)
- Al-Hamdulillah*: Arabic for “praise” of “thanks to Allah”
- Hoja*: a Persian-Turkish word meaning “religious teacher”
- Insha’Allah*: Arabic for “if Allah wills”
- Kariz*: an Uyghur word for the underground water canals used in irrigation
- Khat al-sini*: Arabic for “Chinese handwriting”; a special decorative form of Arabic writing that has been influenced by Chinese calligraphy
- Kharshi elish*: “welcome” in the Uyghur Turkish language
- Khoghun*: Uyghur Turkish word for the many varieties of sweet melon grown in Uyghuristan
- Korban*: a Turkish word referring to the Muslim religious holiday of ‘*eid al-adha*, or “feast of the sacrifice”
- Laghman*: a traditional thick noodle and vegetable soup eaten in Uyghuristan
- Maband*: a Persian word for the long hand-woven strips of fabric nomads use to support their tents
- Masha’Allah*: Arabic for “what Allah has willed”
- Oy*: Uyghur Turkish word for “house”; term used by nomads for their semi-circular tents or yurts
- Qurut*: Turkish word for the cones of dried yoghurt used in winter to make a nutritious soup
- Rahmat*: Uyghur Turkish word for “thank you”
- Takkiyah*: Arabic for the hand-made traditional prayer caps worn by the Muslims of Uyghuristan
- Tocharian: ancient Indo-European language once spoken in western China
- Tunduk*: Uyghur Turkish word for the “roof-ring” found on top of the semi-circular nomadic yurt
- Uyghurje*: the Turkish language spoken and written by Uyghur Turks and other minorities in the western Chinese province of Sinkiang (Uyghuristan)
- Xinjiang*: Chinese word for the western province of China; English “Sinkiang”
- Yak: the short-legged hairy ox inhabiting the mountainous regions of Central Asia
- Yengisar*: Uyghur Turkish word for the beautifully hand-crafted knives popular in Uyghuristan



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